

SYSTEMS AND METHODS FOR ADMINISTERING RETURN SWEEP ACCOUNTS

Related Cases

This is a Continuation-in-Part of Patent Application Serial No. 09/176,340, filed on October 21st, 1998, and Patent Application Serial No. 09/677,535, filed on October 2nd, 2000, the disclosures of which are both incorporated by reference herein.

Background of the Invention

1. Field of the Invention

The invention relates generally to computerized banking techniques and, more specifically, to techniques by which deposits are kept on a bank's balance sheet while being administered as sweep account funds by a third party.

2. Background Art

It would be desirable if investors could obtain fully-insured, interest-bearing bank accounts that offer an unlimited number of fund transfers per month. However, present statutory restrictions prevent banks and savings institutions from paying interest on certain types of deposit accounts. More specifically, Title 12, Part 329, of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) provides that "no bank shall, directly or indirectly, by any device whatsoever, pay interest on any demand deposit". (12 CFR 329.2). A "deposit" is any money placed into a checking account, savings account, Certificate of Deposit (CD), or the like. In a "demand" account, the owner can demand that funds be drawn and paid to another account (having the same or a different owner), or to a third party. These demand payments are typically implemented via bank drafts, checks, credit cards, and debit cards.

Not all bank accounts are considered to be demand accounts. If all, or a fixed amount, of the principal must be maintained in order to achieve the particular benefits afforded by that account, then the account is not a "demand" account. According to the CFR, a "demand deposit" includes any deposit for which the depositor is authorized to make more than six fund "transfers" during any month or statement cycle of at least four weeks. Not all fund transfers will be counted towards the allotted maximum of six; rather, it is necessary to examine the specific type of fund transfer under consideration.. A deposit will be considered a "demand" deposit if the transfer takes place by means of a preauthorized, automatic, or telephonic order specifying the transfer of funds to another account of the depositor at the same bank, to the bank itself, or to a third party. Likewise, a deposit is a "demand" deposit if more than three of the six transfers are authorized to be made by check, draft or debit card (12 CFR 329.1(b)(3)). On the other hand, an unlimited number of transfers is allowed between two accounts registered to the same person or entity, provided that the transfers are made by messenger, mail, telephone (but only via check mailed to the depositor), automated teller machine, or in person. Unless the funds of a deposit are held in a money market account (18 USC 1832(a)), an account for which a depositor has the ability to make at least six transfers will be deemed a demand account, and no interest will be payable on the funds therein. Therefore, owners of demand accounts do not obtain interest on their funds.

One exemplary approach to offering investors fully-insured, interest-bearing accounts that provide up to an unlimited number of fund transfers was disclosed in United States Patent Application Serial No. 09/176,340, referenced above. This application describes a system for managing a plurality of accounts for multiple clients. These accounts, which may originate from a variety of sources, banks, brokerage firms, and/or clients, are held at any of a plurality of savings institutions or banks. The system provides an aggregate insured money market deposit account at a bank or savings institution that is not necessarily an institution at which any of the client accounts are held. The aggregate insured deposit account is linked to

each of the demand accounts in a manner so as to permit deposit funds to be placed into a demand account from various sources, and also so as to provide for the tendering of payments from the demand account via different instruments, without limitation as to the number of transfers. Interest is earned on deposits because funds are transferred from individual client accounts to the managed aggregate insured deposit account.

While a substantial advance over other prior art systems, the above noted system requires the transfer of oftentimes significant funds to comply with various banking regulations. This may be difficult in the case of smaller, community-based banks, as these institutions depend upon such funds as a source for loans. Moreover, some bank clients are not comfortable with arrangements that transfer client funds to unfamiliar third parties.

Pursuant to Regulation Q, banks are prohibited from paying interest on commercial accounts. However, banks have developed several approaches in an effort to compete with brokers who offer interest on cash balances for their commercial customers. These approaches, which include money fund sweeps and repo sweeps, are disadvantageous in that they involve a removal of commercial customer deposits from the bank's balance sheets.

A substantial market exists for an interest-bearing return sweep account that can be readily integrated into the existing infrastructure of a bank or savings institution, while, at the same time, permitting account funds to remain on the bank's balance sheet, with minimal disruption of existing bank-client relationships. It was with the foregoing realizations in mind that the present invention was developed.

Objects and Summary of the Invention

It is an object of the invention to provide bank and/or savings institution clients with the ability to implement up to an unlimited number of transfers while,

at the same time, permitting the bank and/or savings institution to retain client-deposited funds.

It is another object of the invention to provide bank and/or savings institution clients with interest from funds on deposit while simultaneously providing the ability to implement up to an unlimited number of transfers.

It is a further object of the invention to permit the bank and/or savings institution to retain client-deposited funds on its books so that these funds can be used as a source for loans.

It is yet a further object of the invention to provide a banking method that enables clients to deposit funds into an account from any of various sources, and to make payments from the account via any of various instruments, without limitation as to the number of transfers, while still earning interest on the funds in the account.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a banking method that manages a plurality of demand accounts for multiple clients whose funds are held in an aggregate insured deposit account at the client's banking institution but managed by a third party agent.

It is another object of the invention to provide a money market banking method that has a minimal impact on presently-existing, bank-to-client relationships.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a money market banking method which is readily integrable into the existing infrastructure of a bank or savings institution.

These and other objects of the invention are realized in the form of novel systems and methods for managing a plurality of client demand accounts so as to allow a banking institution to retain client deposits on the bank's balance sheets while at the same time, providing the client with the capability of implementing up to an unlimited number of transactions per month and also providing the client with interest on their account balance. These objectives are achieved through the use of an aggregate money market deposit account and an aggregate demand deposit account. These accounts are held on the books of the client's savings institution or

bank, but are managed by a third party agent for the client. In response to client deposits and withdrawals, the agent initiates a transfer of funds between the aggregate demand deposit account and the aggregate money market deposit account. If client deposits exceed client withdrawals, then all or some of the funds in the aggregate demand deposit account may be transferred to the aggregate money market deposit account. On the other hand, if client withdrawals exceed client deposits, then all or some of the funds in the aggregate money market deposit account are transferred to the aggregate demand deposit account. The aggregate money market deposit account is an interest-bearing deposit account, where the aggregate balances for all clients are deposited.

One purpose of the aggregate demand deposit account is to facilitate the movement of funds. On a regular, periodic, or recurring basis, the agent calculates a net transaction as the sum of individual client deposits and withdrawals from the plurality of individual client demand accounts. The net transaction calculation is used to determine an amount of funds that need to be deposited into the aggregate money market deposit account to cover client deposits, or an amount of funds that needs to be withdrawn from the aggregate money market deposit account to cover client withdrawals. Individual account management calculations are performed to determine whether to deposit or withdraw funds from the aggregate demand deposit account to each of a plurality of individual client return sweep and/or money market accounts. The agent updates its database for each client's deposit and withdrawal activities.

The individual client has two accounts, a client demand deposit account on the bank's books, and a return sweep account or money market account on the agent's books. Individual transactions for the client occur between these two client accounts.

The agent distributes all or a portion of the interest accrued from the aggregate deposit account to individual clients. The interest is distributed according to the relative proportions of each client's funds in the aggregate deposit account. The agent maintains a database that keeps track of deposits to, and withdrawals from,

each of the client demand accounts, as well as each client's proportionate and/or monetary share in the aggregate money market deposit account.

The invention permits funds to be deposited into a demand account from various sources, and also provides for the tendering of payments from the demand account via different instruments, without limitation as to the number of transfers, and with accrual of interest on the deposited funds. Moreover, the deposited funds are retained at the client's bank or savings institution. Optionally, the debiting of funds from each of the client accounts is monitored, and debits are selectively authorized or rejected based upon the client's account balance and/or their current share in the aggregate deposit account.

Brief Description of the Drawings

The following is a brief description of the drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is an information flow diagram showing the transfer of client funds among a plurality of accounts pursuant to the techniques of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a flowchart showing an illustrative operational sequence for implementing the techniques of the present invention; and

FIGs. 3-6 together comprise a flowchart depicting processing steps to be performed on behalf of an administrator pursuant to a further embodiment of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

Refer now to FIG. 1, which is a flow diagram showing the transfer of client funds among a plurality of accounts pursuant to the techniques of the present invention. A plurality of client demand accounts, including Client "A" DDA (Demand Deposit Account) 501 and Client "B" DDA Account 503 are managed through the use of an insured pooled deposit account at the client's savings institution or bank. In FIG. 1, this pooled deposit account is provided in the form of a Pooled MMDA (Money Market Deposit Account) 509. Excess funds are swept from client DDA accounts (Client "A" DDA 501 and Client "B" DDA 503, respectively) to corresponding client Money Market Accounts (Client "A" Money Market Account 505 and Client "B" Money Market Account 507, respectively). Excess funds may be calculated in terms of a desired or target minimum balance for each of the client DDA accounts. The same target minimum balance could be applied to all DDA accounts, or an account-specific target balance could be assigned to a certain account based upon the past history and/or the expected usage of that account. Alternatively, all funds could be swept from the client DDA accounts to the Money Market Accounts. After recording the amount of funds swept into a client Money Market Account, the funds are then transferred to the Pooled MMDA Account 509.

The net result of the aforementioned fund transfer activity is that funds are effectively transferred from individual client demand accounts, including Client "A" DDA 501 and Client "B" DDA 503, to a pooled insured deposit account (Pooled MMDA Account 509) at the client's bank or savings institution. This is advantageous in that the Pooled MMDA account 509 is an interest-bearing "non-demand" account pursuant to 12 CFR 329.2 et seq. Moreover, the Pooled MMDA Account is eligible for full FDIC insurance protection. This protection covers each client whose deposits are placed into the pooled account, up to a maximum of \$100,000 per client. As the Pooled MMDA Account 509 accrues interest, all or a portion of this interest is distributed to individual clients. The interest may, but need not, be distributed according to the relative proportions of each client's funds in the Pooled MMDA Account 509.

A database keeps track of deposits to, and withdrawals from, each of the client demand accounts (Client "A" DDA Account 501 and Client "B" DDA Account 503), as well as each client's proportionate and/or monetary share in the Pooled MMDA Account 509. On a regular, periodic, or recurring basis, a net transaction is calculated as the sum of individual client deposits and withdrawals from the plurality of demand accounts. The net transaction calculation is used to determine an amount of funds, if any, that needs to be deposited into the Pooled MMDA Account 509 from the individual client Money Market Accounts (Client "A" Money Market Account 505 and/or Client "B" Money Market Account 507) to cover client deposits. The net transaction calculation is also used to determine an amount, if any, of funds that need to be withdrawn from the Pooled MMDA Account 509 to cover client withdrawals from respective client DDA Accounts (Client "A" DDA Account 501 and/or Client "B" DDA Account 503). In the event that fund withdrawals are required, the necessary funds are first transferred from the Pooled MMDA Account 509 to a Pooled DDA (Demand Deposit Account) 511 which is held at the same savings institution or bank as Pooled MMDA Account 509. On an as-needed basis, funds are then transferred from the Pooled MMDA Account 509 to individual client DDA accounts (Client "A" DDA Account 501 or Client "B" DDA Account 503) to cover checks written by these clients, as well as any fund withdrawals or transfers that clients wish to implement on behalf of their respective DDA Accounts.

Individual account management calculations are performed to determine whether to deposit or withdraw funds from the Pooled DDA Account 511 to each of a plurality of individual client demand accounts. The database is updated for each client's deposit and withdrawal activities. The invention permits funds to be deposited into a client demand account from various sources, and also provides for the tendering of payments from the client demand account via different instruments, without limitation as to the number of transfers, and with accrual of interest on the deposited funds. Optionally, the debiting of funds from each of the client demand accounts is monitored, and debits are selectively authorized or rejected based upon the client's demand account balance and/or their current share in the pooled deposit account.

The foregoing procedures are structured in a manner so as to permit banks and savings institutions to continue servicing their clients as they have done in the past. Moreover, if desired, these procedures could be implemented by an agent acting on behalf of one or more clients. In this manner, the invention would be virtually transparent to presently-existing banks and savings institutions. Bank personnel would not be burdened with the requirement to perform unfamiliar and potentially time-consuming procedures. Pursuant to this "agency" approach, the agent effectively provides a "sweep interface" between a client's existing DDA account (i.e., Client "A" DDA Account 501) and a fully-insured, interest-bearing pooled account (i.e., the Pooled MMDA Account 509). The agent opens up the Pooled MMDA Account 509 and the Pooled DDA Account 511 at the client's bank or savings institution. The agent is responsible for several administrative activities, including: (1) recordkeeping in connection with the individual Client Money Market accounts (Client "A" Money Market Account 505 and Client "B" Money Market Account 507); (2) determining each client's proportionate share in the Pooled MMDA Account 509; (3) determining an appropriate balance for the Pooled DDA Account 511; and (4) determining appropriate transfers from the Pooled DDA Account 511 to any of the client DDA accounts.

Although banks and savings institutions can provide DDA, MMDA and checking account services to clients without utilizing a third-party agent, under the current statutory scheme, these institutions cannot pay interest on account balances, and at the same time, allow for an unlimited number of transactions. Pursuant to Regulation D, banks and savings institutions are prohibited from automatically allowing unlimited fund transfers between DDAs and MMDAs on behalf of clients. A client could open up his own DDA and MMDA accounts, evaluate daily DDA activities, determine if funds should be moved between the DDA and the MMDA, and instruct the bank to transfer the appropriate funds. However, it would be time consuming and inefficient. The use of an agent provides administrative expediency, ending the entire operational scheme more attractive to the client as well as the banking institution.

Advantageously, the agent maintains the client's original DDA account number that uniquely identifies that client's account at his or her bank or savings institution. This account number is used as a cross-reference to keep track of each client's proportionate interest in the Pooled MMDA Account 509. The client Money Market Account numbers (for Client "A" Money Market Account 505 and Client "B" Money Market Account 506) are transparent to these clients, as is the account number for the Pooled MMDA Account 509.

Effectively, a "sweep interface" exists between each of respective individual client DDA Accounts (Client "A" DDA Account 501 and Client "B" DDA Account 503) and corresponding individual client Money Market Accounts (Client "A" Money Market Account 505 and Client "B" Money Market Account 507). Excess funds in the individual client DDA accounts are swept to the individual client Money Market accounts to be further credited to the Pooled MMDA Account 509. If funds are needed to pay for a check or handle a withdrawal, funds are redeemed via the Pooled DDA Account 511. The sweep interface may be governed by any of a number of established or specified parameters. For example, the bank may choose

to leave a certain dollar amount in each of the client DDA accounts to cover checks and only sweep funds in excess of that amount. Or the bank may decide to sweep everything and redeem funds based upon the checks presented for payment. From the standpoint of the bank or savings institution, no additional work is required.

5 The bank merely maintains the client's existing individual DDA account along with the client's profile (name, address, check reorders, signature on file, stop payment orders, etc). Bank clients will be able to keep their existing checks, and to continue using their existing DDA accounts. Deposits are credited to these DDA accounts and then swept to the pooled MMDA account. Many of the required administrative
10 activities are performed by the agent on behalf of designated client accounts. These administrative activities basically involve the monitoring of fund sweeping to and from individual client DDA accounts and corresponding individual Money Market accounts, as well as transfers among the individual Money Market, Pooled MMDA and Pooled DDA Accounts maintained by the agent. On a daily, regular, repeated, or periodic basis, the bank or savings institution transmits a transaction sweep data file to the agent that includes deposit and withdrawal information for each of a plurality of clients. The bank and the agent periodically or repeatedly reconcile the sweep data file and agree upon a net settlement figure. If the net settlement figure is a credit, the bank or savings institution credits the Pooled DDA Account 511.

20 During routine, day-to-day system operations, the only transactions that occur in the Pooled MMDA Account 509 are transfers either to or from the Pooled DDA Account. Pursuant to an optional alternative approach, the bank could allocate credits to the Pooled MMDA Account 509. In any event, if the net settlement figure is a debit, the bank or savings institution debits the Pooled DDA Account
25 511. The agent provides instructions by messenger to transfer funds from the Pooled MMDA Account 509 to the Pooled DDA Account 511 to cover the debit balance in the account. At the end of a predetermined period of time (such as a month), the agent can provide a monthly statement file to the bank or savings institution. This file may include activity for a client's individual money market
30 account as maintained in an agent database. The bank or savings institution can

then use this monthly statement file to generate month end statements for its clients. According to one preferred embodiment of the invention, activity pertaining to other accounts is tracked and maintained by the bank or savings institution.

However, pursuant to an alternate embodiment, this statement file could optionally include Pooled MMDA, Pooled DDA, individual Money Market, and/or individual DDA account activity.

Refer now to FIG. 2, which is a flowchart showing an illustrative operational sequence for implementing the techniques of the present invention. The procedure commences at block 701, where a client makes a deposit to their individual DDA Account (i.e., Client "A" DDA 501, FIG. 1), or at block 703, where a client makes a withdrawal from their individual DDA Account. Irrespective of whether the transaction is a withdrawal or a deposit, a sweep process is performed (block 707) to sweep any excess account funds out of the client's individual DDA account, or to sweep required funds into this DDA account. A test is performed at block 709 to ascertain whether or not there are excess funds in the individual client's DDA account. If so, program control jumps ahead to block 713, whereas if not, the program continues on to block 711. At block 713, the excess funds are swept to the agent, who then updates the individual client Money Market account (block 717).

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5 The negative branch from block 709 leads to block 711, where a test is performed to ascertain whether or not there is an insufficient minimum balance in the individual client's DDA account. If not, the program exits. If so, program control advances to block 715 where funds are swept from the agent. The agent then updates the individual client Money Market account (block 717). Next, on a periodic, repeated, or scheduled basis, the agent calculates the net sweep account activity (block 719). A test is performed at block 721 to ascertain whether or not the net sweep activity is a credit. If so, program control advances to block 723 and, if not, program control continues to block 725. At block 723, the agent receives payment from the bank for the credit . Payment can be received, for example, in the form of a wire transfer or a credit to the pooled DDA account. Next, the agent instructs the bank to deposit the received funds into the pooled MMDA account (block 727). Funds are transferred into the pooled MMDA account (block 731), and the program exits.

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15 The negative branch from block 721 leads to block 725 where a test is performed to ascertain whether or not the net sweep activity is a debit. If not, the program exits and, if so, the program continues to block 729. At block 729, a messenger is instructed to initiate a fund transfer from the pooled MMDA account to the pooled DDA account. The funds are transferred from the pooled MMDA to the pooled DDA (block 733), and the agent pays the bank or savings institution from the pooled DDA account for the sweep debit. The program then exits.

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FIGs. 3 and 4 together comprise a flowchart depicting processing steps to be performed on behalf of an agent or administrator pursuant to a further embodiment of the present invention. This agent or administrator can be a brokerage firm, a bank, or another financial entity with which clients can institute financial transactions such as deposits, withdrawals and on-demand payments. The administrator or agent appears to each client as if it were, at least in part, a bank, by accepting deposits for the client's account, and, subsequently, by authorizing (and then implementing) payments demanded by the client from his or her account. The funds for all of the clients are pooled into a single deposit account that is maintained as an insured deposit account at a licensed bank or savings institution.

Referring to FIG. 3, financial entity 100 may be a bank, savings institution, brokerage firm, or other entity where financial transactions take place or can be facilitated. This financial entity 100 creates transaction files 101 which are transmitted to Reserve 105. Reserve 105 (or the Reserve System) is the administrator or other entity in charge of administering at least one of the deposit accounts. New account files 102 can be transmitted to Reserve 105. For example, a new investor account may need to be opened. This activity necessitates organizing and coordinating information to service a new investor for the present system, even though that investor may already be a client of a financial entity 100 for other investment vehicles. A new account 102 effectively becomes part of an existing pooled bank deposit account 129 that collects earned income 130, all or a portion of which is eventually conveyed to the client's accounts 131. Of course, at some point in time, the deposit account must first be established with clients' funds. The transaction files represent the addition of funds by check (to be drawn on another institution, or to be drawn from a different demand account at the same institution), wire or electronic transfer, ACH, credits (such as from a debit or credit card merchant), or a sweep from one of the client's other accounts. Accordingly, encompassed in the transaction file are deposits 103 and withdrawals 104. A "sweep" includes the automatic transfer of funds, such as the automated transfer of interest from one account into the client's account, as well as the automated transfer

of funds out of the client's account (such as for payment of a securities trade); thus, a sweep may be from one of the client's accounts to another. The responsibility for maintaining the deposit account can be assigned by the administrator to a third party.

5 Referring now to FIG. 4, Reserve System 50 contains an insured deposit database 75 where a position file for debit/credit card users is created 132 and transmitted to a bank for a debit/credit card network 133 where the bank then updates the network 134. The system updates the data base 75 and processes transactions 106 (from 105, FIG. 3) and opens a new account 107 where application and check deposits are processed 110. The bank preference 107A is the list of banks and the order of preference for deposits and withdrawals held on the account, including a list of banks to be excluded (if any), and the maximum percentage and/or amount of funds to be held in each bank. The client's bank preference data is added to the account at 107B. If the client does not select values for any of these variables, the system can provide default values for the banks and their order at 107C sufficient for all of the client's funds. When possible, the system can be configured to assign a bank that is in the state in which the client resides. Referring to FIG. 5, it can be seen that when a deposit, either a check deposit 111, federal wire deposit 112, ACH deposit, sweep, or other deposit is credited to the client's account 108, the system will review where the existing funds of the accounts are deposited 108A. If the client's balance has reached the maximum allowable balance for the existing bank 108B, as shown in FIG. 6, the system will then select the next bank on the preference list attached to the account 108C. If the maximum allowable balance has not been reached in the existing bank, the system will credit the additional funds to that bank 108D.

Still referring to FIG. 5, the procedure for processing withdrawals can be seen. Various methods of withdrawing funds are debit withdrawal 109, processing debit or credit card transactions such as debit/credit card files 115, direct debit accounts 215, and processing of files 121. Processing of a debit/credit card file 115 utilizes data accumulated from debit/credit card transactions received from the

banks 114. The processing of file 121 procedure utilizes one of various sources of data such as a check presented for payment 116, ACH debits 117, touch tone bill paying 118, and/or internet bill paying 119.

After processing the debit procedure, the system will review the bank preference list and select the appropriate bank to debit 125A. The system will sort all the daily transactions by the bank 125B (see FIG. 6). The activity for each bank will then be netted 126 and the appropriate deposit or withdrawals made.

The system will then determine whether funds are available 122, which function is also associated with other participant withdrawals 120. If the funds are available, the account is debited 225. If the funds are not available, however, the system determines whether a credit line is available 123. If a credit line is available, then funds are advanced 230 to cover the debit; if not the transaction is rejected 124.

Referring to FIG. 6, as previously stated, the system determines whether the client's balance reaches its maximum 108B. If so, the next bank on the list selected by the client is credited 108C. If the maximum is not reached, then the existing bank is credited 108D. Information and activities associated with processed debits and credits of the client's accounts from 125A are sorted by the bank 125B and the net activity by the bank is determined 126. The system then determines whether the deposits and credits were greater than the withdrawals and debits 240. If so, the excess funds are deposited into a deposit account 127. If the debits and withdrawals were greater than the credits, the difference is redeemed from the deposit account 128.

Thus, by practicing the embodiment of the invention described in connection with FIGs. 3-6, an individual client is effectively provided with FDIC insurance in excess of \$ 100,000. This result is brought about because the individual client's holdings are maintained in multiple insured deposit accounts, which may be in multiple banks.

The foregoing description is intended to be illustrative and not limiting. Any of various changes, modifications, and/or additions may become apparent to the

skilled artisan upon a perusal of this specification, and, as such, are intended to be within the scope and spirit of the invention as defined by the claims.

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